



VII. Benefits for Survivors

Coverage A and B. The amount depends on the member's coverage and whether the death occurred before or after his or her retirement. If the member has not named a beneficiary, the member's estate receives the lump-sum death payment.

Monthly Allowances

Monthly allowances may be paid to eligible survivors of members who die before retirement or who are receiving a disability allowance at the time of death.

These monthly allowances are not the same as payments made to option beneficiaries of CalSTRS members who had elected a pre-retirement option. See page 21 for more information on pre-retirement option election.

Member Has Less Than One Year of Service Credit

If a member has less than one year of service credit, the benefit payable to the surviving beneficiary is a refund of accumulated retirement contributions and credited interest.

If a CalSTRS Member Dies Before Retirement — Coverage A

Under Coverage A, benefits are payable to survivors of a person who became a member of CalSTRS before October 16, 1992, and did not elect Coverage B.

Lump-Sum Death Payment

Under Coverage A, if a CalSTRS member dies before he or she retires, or while receiving a disability allowance, CalSTRS pays a \$5,598 lump-sum death payment to the beneficiary(ies) chosen by the member. (This amount is adjusted periodically by the Teachers' Retirement Board.) If more than

The CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program provides benefits to survivors of members who die, either before or after retirement. These benefits are designed to provide a basic level of security for survivors and vary depending on whether the member was covered under Coverage A, Family Allowance or Coverage B, Survivor Benefit.

Coverage A or Coverage B

If you became a CalSTRS member after October 15, 1992, your survivors are protected under Coverage B. If you became a CalSTRS member before that date, you were offered the choice of either Coverage A or Coverage B.

Your annual statement of account will show which survivor coverage you have, or, if you are not certain of your coverage, you can call the CalSTRS Public Service Office at 800-228-5453 or (916) 229-3870.

Lump-Sum Death Payment

A lump-sum death payment is payable to the designated beneficiary(ies) under both



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one beneficiary is named, the payment is divided equally, unless the member specifies other percentages of distribution. If there is no designated beneficiary, CalSTRS must make the payment to the estate of the deceased member.

For CalSTRS to pay this benefit, the member must have had one year or more of credited service (including one year of credited service following the most recent refund of accumulated retirement contributions) and death must have occurred during one of the following periods:

- while the member was actively employed or receiving a disability allowance
- within four months after the member terminated employment
- within four months after the member terminated a disability allowance if no service was performed after the termination
- within 12 months of the last day of paid service, if the member was on an approved leave of absence without compensation, for reasons other than disability or military service

Note: Coverage A includes a provision that would provide death benefits if the disability had been continuous from the last day for which compensation had been paid.

Family Allowance

How do survivors qualify for the monthly Coverage A family allowance?

The member must have met the same eligibility requirements as for the lump-sum death payment described above, and the member:

- cannot have a pre-retirement election of an option in effect
- must have earned one year of credited CalSTRS service since reinstatement from service retirement (if applicable)
- must have earned at least one-half year of credited service after a break in service of more than one year (if applicable)

Under Coverage A, a monthly family allowance is payable to:

1) The surviving spouse with eligible children

A dependent child is eligible if he or she is:

- the natural, adopted or stepchild of the member and not adopted by a person other than the member's spouse
- born within the 10-month period commencing on the date the member died
- under age 22 and unmarried at the time of the member's death **and**
- financially dependent upon the member on the date the member died, or on the effective date of disability, if the member died while receiving a disability allowance

The surviving spouse will receive 40 percent of the member's final compensation* and 10 percent of the member's final compensation for each child up to a maximum of 50 percent for five or more children. The maximum family allowance is 90 percent of a member's final compensation. The family allowance is payable as long as there is an unmarried, dependent child under the age of 22. (See example on page 55)



2) The surviving spouse with no eligible children

If there are no eligible children (or when the last child is no longer eligible), the surviving spouse may elect to receive:

- a return of the accumulated contributions and interest in the member's account at the time of death, less all monthly allowances paid

OR

- a monthly allowance beginning at age 60, payable for life. The calculation is based on the projected service and final compensation the member would have accrued as if he or she retired at age 60
- a monthly allowance before age 60, actuarially reduced

**For periods of part-time employment (hourly, substitute, daily), final compensation may be computed using actual salary earned during that period. Contact CalSTRS for more information.*

3) *Dependent children, but no surviving spouse*

If there are dependent children, but no surviving spouse, the dependent children are eligible for 10 percent of the member's final compensation for each child up to a maximum allowance of 50 percent. More than five eligible dependent children will share equally in the total 50 percent of final compensation. Benefits are payable to each child until the child is no longer eligible (marries, attains age 22, or is no longer dependent). Once all children are no longer eligible for a benefit, any remaining contributions and interest in the member's account, less all monthly allowances paid, will be paid to the member's beneficiary.

4) *Dependent parents*

A family allowance can be paid to dependent parents if there is no surviving spouse and no dependent children. A parent will be paid a monthly payment for life beginning at age 60 or, if the dependent parent is under age 60, he or she may elect to receive an actuarially reduced allowance for life. For more information about eligibility requirements for this allowance, contact CalSTRS.

5) *Named beneficiary*

If there is not a surviving spouse, eligible children or dependent parents, the remaining contributions and interest in the member's account, if any, will be paid to the named beneficiary(ies) designated to receive the lump-sum death payment.

Offsets

CalSTRS must offset any family allowance under Coverage A by the amount of benefits payable by other public systems because of a member's death. Other public systems include Social Security; federal civil service retirement; federal military disability; railroad retirement; and any other public retirement system, including disability programs financed from public funds.

A copy of the award letter(s) must be sent to CalSTRS so that payments can be adjusted.

Coverage A — Family Allowance

Example

Rob dies at age 40. His survivors include a spouse with eligible children.

Example — Coverage A

Member: Rob, age 40

Spouse: Linda, age 40

Children: Mike 15, Robert 10, & Sandy 5

Service Credit: 10 years

Final Compensation	\$3,220
a. Spouse's Allowance (40% x \$3,220)	\$ 1,288
b. Children's Increment 3 x 10% x \$3,220	\$ 966
Family Allowance with eligible children (a+b)	\$ 2,254
Less Social Security offset (\$500)	- \$ 500
Amount payable by CalSTRS	\$ 1,754

Linda will receive a monthly family allowance of \$1,754 as long as she has three eligible children. In addition, an annual allowance improvement increase of 2 percent of the basic allowance will be added to the monthly payment each September, beginning a year after Rob's death. As each child becomes ineligible, that child's increment will no longer be included in the basic allowance.

When her youngest child reaches age 22, or is no longer eligible, Linda, age 57, will have to make a choice:

- She can take the remaining contributions and interest in Rob's account, less all previously paid benefits.

OR

- At age 60, Linda can receive the surviving spouse allowance payable for life. She will receive a monthly payment of \$1,353.85, based on Rob's projected service and projected final compensation. This equals one-half of what Rob would have received if he had worked to age 60 and elected Option 3.*



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OR

- If Linda elects to receive the surviving spouse allowance before age 60, the allowance will be actuarially reduced.

**The calculation will also include service credit for the member's unused sick leave if he or she became a CalSTRS member before July 1, 1980, or died on or after January 1, 1999.*




If a CalSTRS Member Dies Before Retirement — Coverage B

Under Coverage B, benefits are payable to survivors of a person who became a member of CalSTRS on or after October 16, 1992, or elected Coverage B.



Lump-Sum Death Payment

Under Coverage B, if a CalSTRS member dies before he or she retires, CalSTRS pays a \$22,394 lump-sum death payment to the beneficiary(ies) chosen by the member. (This amount is adjusted periodically by the Teachers' Retirement Board.) If more than one beneficiary is named, the payment is divided equally, unless the member specified other percentages of distribution. If there is no designated beneficiary, CalSTRS must make the payment to the estate of the deceased member.




For CalSTRS to pay this benefit, the member must have had one year or more of credited service. If the member had taken a refund of contributions or had reinstated after retirement, the member must have:

- earned one year of credited service

OR

- six months must have elapsed since reinstatement from disability retirement

OR

- one year must have elapsed since reinstatement from service retirement **and**
 - the member's death must have occurred during one of the following periods:
- 

- while the member was actively employed
- within four months after the member terminated CalSTRS-covered employment
- within 12 months of the last day of paid service, if the member was on an approved leave of absence without compensation, for reasons other than disability or military service

Survivor Benefit

How do survivors qualify for the monthly Coverage B survivor benefit?

The member must have met the same eligibility requirements as for the lump-sum death payment and the member:

- must not have a pre-retirement election of an option in effect
- must have earned one year of credited CalSTRS service since reinstatement from service retirement (if applicable)
- must have earned at least one-half year of service credit after a break in service of more than one year (if applicable)
- must have died within four months after reinstatement from disability retirement, if member had reinstated to active membership from disability retirement

Under Coverage B, a monthly survivor benefit is payable to:

1) The surviving spouse

Under Coverage B, the monthly survivor benefit allowance payment is made to a surviving spouse.

The spouse is eligible for a monthly allowance whether there are eligible children or not. The allowance is calculated as if the member had retired under Option 3 on the date of death. Under Coverage B, a surviving spouse has the choice of receiving either a monthly allowance or a return of the member's contributions and interest.

The surviving spouse can begin receiving the survivor benefit allowance either:

- immediately as of the member's date of death
(The benefit is reduced if the member was under age 60 at the time of death.)

OR

- when the deceased member *would have reached* age 60

The monthly allowance is calculated on the member's actual service credit and final compensation* at the time of the member's death. If the member dies on or before age 60, the member's and spouse's ages as of the date the member would have attained age 60 are used in the calculation.

If the member dies after age 60, the member's age and spouse's age as of the date of death will be used in the calculation.

The survivor benefit calculation will also include service credit for the member's unused sick leave if he or she became a CalSTRS member before July 1, 1980, or died on or after January 1, 1999.

2) Eligible children

If there are eligible dependent children and the spouse decides to take a survivor benefit, each child will also receive a monthly allowance.

No child's allowance is payable if there is no surviving spouse or if the surviving spouse decides to receive a return of the member's contributions.

A child is eligible if he or she is:

- the natural, adopted or stepchild of the member and not adopted by a person other than the member's spouse **and**
- under age 21 at the time of the member's death **and**

- financially dependent upon the member at the time of death

The child's allowance begins on the day following the member's date of death and is payable until age 21, even if the spouse elects to wait to receive a monthly survivor allowance until the member's 60th birthday.

If the surviving spouse dies before the last child reaches age 21, the children's allowance is still payable until the child attains age 21. Once all children are no longer eligible for a benefit, any remaining contributions and interest in the member's account, less all monthly allowances paid, will be paid to the member's beneficiary.

Each child's allowance is 10 percent of the member's final compensation, up to a maximum of 50 percent for five or more children.

Offsets

The monthly survivor benefit allowance under Coverage B is *not* reduced by benefits payable from other public systems, such as Social Security.

Coverage B—Survivor Benefit Allowance Example

Rob dies at age 40. His survivors include a spouse with eligible children.

Member	Rob, age 40
Spouse	Linda, age 40
Children	Mike 15, Robert 10, and Sandy 5
Service credit	10 years
Final compensation	\$3,220

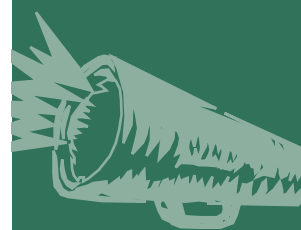
Linda can choose the surviving spouse allowance or she can choose to take a refund of the contributions and interest in Rob's CalSTRS account. However, *if she does not elect a monthly allowance, the children are not entitled to monthly benefits.*

**For periods of part-time employment (hourly, substitute, daily), final compensation may be computed using actual salary earned during that period. Contact CalSTRS for more information.*



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If Linda elects the survivor benefit allowance, each child will immediately receive 10 percent of final compensation (\$322 each) as of the date of Rob's death, until age 21.

Linda's Choices

Linda can either defer receipt of her surviving spouse allowance until Rob would have reached his 60th birthday (normal retirement age) or she can choose to receive a reduced allowance immediately. (NOTE: The surviving spouse allowance is calculated as if the member lived to age 60 and retired naming her as an Option 3 beneficiary, which is 50 percent of the modified allowance.)

If Linda's choice is to defer receipt of her surviving spouse allowance, the children will receive the following benefit immediately as of the date of Rob's death:

10% of final compensation for each child
(\$322 x 3 children) \$966

(Linda would receive no spouse allowance until Rob would have reached age 60, which would be 20 years from this time. She would then receive a spouse allowance of \$303.64 for the rest of her life. See below for calculation of the Option 3 beneficiary allowance.)

If Linda elects to take her surviving spouse allowance immediately, the family will receive the following survivor benefit allowance:

Linda's reduced spouse allowance (see calculation below) \$ 52.84
10% of final compensation for each child
(\$322 x 3 children) \$966.00
Total \$1018.84

Each child's separate allowance will stop when that child reaches age 21. After Linda's last child turns 21, she will continue to receive her spouse's allowance, \$52.84 per month in this case, for her lifetime. In addition, an annual allowance improvement increase of 2 percent of each basic allowance will be added each September, beginning a year after Rob's death.

Example Calculations

Rob's unmodified allowance, as if he were age 60

2% x 10 years of service credit x \$3,220 final compensation = \$644.00

Modified allowance, based on Option 3 factor of 94.3%

(member and spouse age 60)

.9430 x \$644 = \$607.29

Option 3 - Beneficiary receives one-half the member's modified allowance

\$607.29 ÷ 2 = \$303.65

Choices Linda has to make for the spouse's monthly allowance:

deferring allowance until Rob's 60th birthday

$\$607.29 \div 2 = \303.65

OR

starting allowance as of the date of Rob's death

$\$303.65 \times .1740$ (age 40 reduction factor))
= \$52.84

What if there is no surviving spouse?

No monthly benefits are payable to survivors if there is no surviving spouse. The member's accumulated retirement contributions and interest shall be paid to the member's beneficiary in a lump sum.



When a Member Dies After Retirement—Coverages A and B

Lump-Sum Death Payment

If a member dies after he or she is retired, the lump-sum death payment is the same under both Coverage A and Coverage B.

CalSTRS pays a \$5,598 lump-sum death payment to the beneficiary(ies) of a retired member. (The amount of the payment may be adjusted periodically by the Teachers' Retirement Board.) If more than one beneficiary is named, the payment is divided equally, unless the member specified other percentages of distribution. If there is no designated beneficiary, CalSTRS must make the payment to the estate of the deceased member.

Monthly Allowance

Once a member has retired, no monthly allowance is payable to survivors unless the member has chosen one of the options described in Section V, Service Retirement, Electing an Option. If the member has chosen an option, the option beneficiary(ies) will receive the monthly allowance payable under that particular option. If the retired member has not chosen an option, he or she has been receiving an unmodified monthly allowance.

Unmodified Monthly Allowance

For the retired member who elects the unmodified allowance and receives it for his or her lifetime, no continuing monthly allowance will be payable to a beneficiary.

However, the designated beneficiary(ies) **will** receive the allowance accrued during the month of death and any residual contributions and interest that may be in the retired member's account, after all allowance payments made to the retired member have been deducted.

Example — Dies After Retirement

Elaine had been retired for 10 years at the time of her death on the 15th of the month. Elaine's monthly allowance was \$950. She had \$35,000 in contributions and interest at the time of retirement and received \$115,000 in retirement benefits before her death.

The amount payable to Elaine's beneficiary would be calculated as follows:

Contribution and interest balance at retirement	\$ 35,000
Less retirement allowance paid	- \$115,000
Remaining contributions and interest	0
Accrued monthly allowance during the month of death (1/2 month x \$950)	\$ 475
Lump-sum death payment	\$ 5,598
Total Payable	\$ 6,073

How to Report the Death of a CalSTRS Member or Benefit Recipient

CalSTRS should be notified as soon as possible of the death of a member, option beneficiary or payee receiving CalSTRS benefits. This can be done by writing to:

CalSTRS
P. O. Box 15275
Sacramento CA 95851-0275
Or by calling the CalSTRS Public
Service Office at: 800-228-5453
or 916-229-3870

CalSTRS will need the following information:

- deceased person's name and Social Security number
- date of death
- individual's status immediately preceding death: retired, disabled, a member in active teaching status, option beneficiary or other payee
- name, address and telephone number of contact person



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Applications

Applications for survivor benefits are now taken over the telephone in most cases. A caseworker will contact the beneficiaries to complete the application over the telephone. The name and telephone number of the caseworker will be provided to the beneficiaries within five days of the notification.

The original or copy of the death certificate must be sent to CalSTRS. CalSTRS payments issued to the deceased after the date of death must be returned to CalSTRS. The appropriate parties will be contacted if additional certificates or documents are needed.



Payment of Benefits

CalSTRS generally pays survivor benefits to beneficiaries within 45 days of the receipt of the last required document. Payment may be delayed if documentation, such as marriage or death certificates, is not received in a timely manner or because of the absence of a valid beneficiary designation form on file with current beneficiary addresses.

